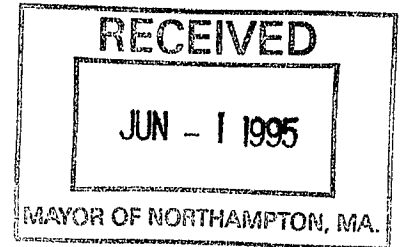


m.vito



May 31, 1995

The Honorable Mary Ford  
City Hall  
210 Main Street  
Northampton, MA 01060

RE: Charter Study Committee

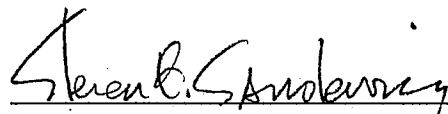
Dear Mayor Ford:

The Charter Study Committee is unanimously recommending that the election of a Charter Commission be placed on the November 7, 1995 ballot.

After several meetings and a public hearing the Committee felt that a Charter Commission may want to review the areas listed on the attached exhibit. I have also enclosed copies of our meeting minutes for you to review.

Please give me a call at your convenience if you would like to discuss this matter further. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve on this Committee.

Very truly yours,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Steven E. Samolewicz, Chairman  
Charter Study Committee

SES/jrm

## EXHIBIT

- Financial structure of the city
- Home Rule
- Updating and improving the language of the Charter
- Civil Service
- Job descriptions and qualifications
- City officers: elected v. appointed
- Who should preside over city council and school committee meetings



CITY OF NORTHAMPTON  
MASSACHUSETTS

CITY HALL  
210 Main Street  
Northampton, MA 01060

Michael J. Vito  
*Executive Assistant  
for Community Services*

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
(413) 586-6950  
FAX: (413) 586-3726

CITY CHARTER STUDY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF 1/4/95 MEETING

Present: Mayor Mary L. Ford  
Patricia Shaughnessy  
Maureen Tobin  
Michael Ahearn, Jr.  
Edward Morin  
Suzanne Petersson

Absent: Michael Bardsley  
Russell Carrier  
Steven Samolewicz, chair  
M. Sanford Weil, Jr.

Mayor Ford opened the meeting promptly at 7 p.m. by stressing the mission of the Charter Study Committee, which is: to recommend whether or not the city should overhaul its current 112-year-old Charter, or stick to the current structure.

Ford would like the group to reach a decision by the spring, in case they decide the charter should be changed. This would enable enough time for a formal Charter Commission on the November ballot.

Members would like a recap of past charter revision attempts, namely in 1973 and 1981. Newspaper accounts of those efforts are pretty thorough and are available on microfilm at Forbes Library and at the Daily Hampshire Gazette, which has a separate file on



Charter Review. Just tell Gazette Librarian Nancy Rhoades that "Vito sent me" and she will allow a quick browsing of the file. City Council President Patrick M. Goggins also has his own personal file he might be willing to share.

Mayor Ford suggested the group invite various city department heads to future meetings to offer their thoughts on the positives and negatives of Northampton's current municipal structure. Kathleen Fallon should also be invited to discuss the other types of municipal government a formal Charter Commission can consider adopting, if this group decides to take that route.

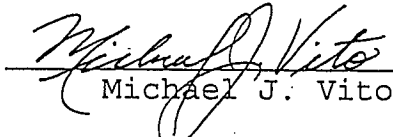
Patte Shaughnessy volunteered to contact Barnstable, which recently reviewed its charter, so the group can compare their form of government to Northampton's. Maureen Tobin will do the same with Pittsfield and Mayor Ford will contact municipal officials in Agawam.

Suzanne Petersson also suggested bringing in civic leaders and government academics to also discuss governmental structures. She will also contact the League of Women Voters to find out whether they could provide the group with a volunteer to document the meeting's minutes.

Mayor Ford will meet with Steve Samolewicz before the next meeting, scheduled for Jan. 24, at 4:45 p.m. The location will be announced and posted during the interim.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Submitted by:

  
Michael J. Vito



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Michael J. Vito  
*Executive Assistant  
for Community Services*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 25, 1995  
TO: Charter Study Committee

CHARTER STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
January 24, 1995

Present: Michael Ahearn, Jr.  
Michael R. Bardsley  
Russell W. Carrier  
Maureen C. Tobin  
M. Sanford Weil, Jr.

Absent: Edward A. Morin  
Suzanne S. Petersson  
Steven E. Samolewicz, chairman  
Patricia A. Shaughnessy

The meeting was called promptly at 4:45 p.m. with five of the nine Charter Study Committee members present. Three of those had missed the first meeting and were updated on the events at the last meeting.

Maureen Tobin said she is still awaiting information from Pittsfield regarding their City Charter, and Michael Vito, representing Mayor Ford, noted the same situation with Agawam. Tobin also told the group that she would be on the lookout at this week's Massachusetts Municipal Association Conference in Boston for pertinent information regarding Charter change.

The group agreed that at a future meeting they should plan to invite people with some expertise in Charter Reform, namely those who served on the city's own last major reform effort of 1973. Alvertus J. Morse chaired the 1973 Charter Committee and other members included Patrick M. Goggins, John Rockett and John Lawlor.



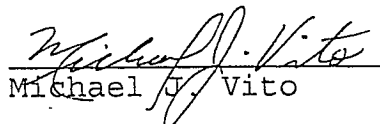
People such as Don Robinson, of Smith College, Kathleen Fallon, city solicitor, and Jerry Milleur, of UMASS, could also offer useful perspectives. The keeper of the Jan. 24 minutes has discovered that the state Attorney General's office also has a resident expert on Charter Reform: Anthony Penskey.

Members also focused on their main objective, which is to recommend whether substantive changes in the city Charter are warranted. Everyone agreed that the language contained in the present document is archaic and should probably be changed. But there was no need to dwell on that. It was agreed that the Study Committee members should read the current charter carefully, and pick out pieces that they feel are either substantive or structural problems that should be changed. These will then be discussed at the next scheduled meeting. This will give the study committee a good indication of where people stand, and gauge the amount of changes they feel are needed.

It was also suggested that the group contact Irene Lamson, to see if there is a senior volunteer available to take the group's minutes until they come up with a recommendation to the mayor and City Council. Michael Vito will contact Irene and report back to the chairman, Steve Samolewicz.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 14 at <sup>5:00</sup>~~4:45~~ p.m. in the second-floor hearing room of City Hall. The following meeting has been tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, March 14 at 4:45 p.m., also in the hearing room.

Submitted by:

  
Michael J. Vito

# CITY CHARTER STUDY COMMITTEE

## MEETING MINUTES

February 14, 1995

Present:   Maureen Tobin                   Michael Bardsley  
             Michael Ahern, Jr.         Russell Carrier  
             Suzanne Peterson         M. Sanford Weil, Jr.

Absent:     Patricia Shaughnessy  
             Edward Morin

Steven Samolewicz opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m. He indicated that he would take the minutes to meetings.

Discussion began with Sanford Weil questioning the definition of "home rule". Various committee members attempted to define the term. Steven Samolewicz will contact Kathleen Fallon for further definition of the term.

Maureen Tobin volunteered to make copies of the 1973 proposed charter and to distribute copies to the committee members.

Steven Samolewicz indicated that Mike Vito has provided copies of the Agawam and Newton charters. Anyone interested in reviewing these should contact Steven Samolewicz.

Committee members agreed that the language in the current charter is archaic and that alone may be sufficient basis to advise that a formal charter review committee be formed.

Maureen Tobin suggested that notes regarding repealed sections and editors' notes of the charter should be deleted entirely from the text and, possibly, included as an appendix. This will allow for easier reading.

Russell Carrier suggested that the committee investigate the cost of changing the charter with the use of charter consultants. He stated that some of these consultants have software programs to help with preparing the formal charter document.

The committee began reviewing the various sections of the charter and offered the following comments:

Section 5 - Warden, Clerk and Inspector of Elections  
Should this be repealed because it is outdated?

Section 9 - Term of Mayor and City Council  
Should council terms be staggered? Longer terms?

Section 10 - Elections Generally  
Should it be modified by adding new dates for elections? We may want to add language ensuring the city committees, especially the City Council, keep detailed minutes of meetings.

Section 11 - Mayor's Powers and Duties Generally  
Should the Mayor preside over the City Council?

The next meeting will be on March 7, 1995, at 5:00 p.m. in the City Hall Hearing Room.

Meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Submitted by,

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Steven E. Samolewicz



CHARTER STUDY COMMITTEE  
Minutes Of March 7, 1995 Meeting

Present: Suzanne Peterson  
Pat Shaugnessy  
Sanford Weil  
Edward Morin  
Maureen Tobin  
Steve Samolewicz

Absent: Michael Bardsley  
Russell Carrier  
Michael Ahearn

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

Pat Goggins spoke to the committee about prior charter reform efforts in the city. Pat spoke about how the 1973 Charter Commission received a \$10,000 budget to hire a charter consultant who was very helpful to the Commission. The charter review process lasted one and a half years only to fail at election time in 1973.

In 1983 the charter reform effort centered on non-partisan elections.

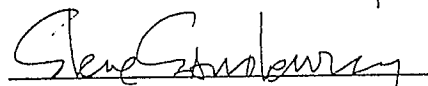
Pat spoke about how it may be timely to review financial organization areas of the city government because of the many inconsistencies between some positions being appointed and others elected. He felt that it may be an appropriate time to review the positions of tax collector, auditor and assessor.

The committee was told that since 1983 50 communities in Massachusetts have attempted charter reform and 25 have passed new charters.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Next meetings are scheduled for March 28, 1995 and April 25, 1995. Tentative plans are to schedule a public hearing in May.

Submitted by:

  
Steve Samolewicz

CHARTER STUDY COMMITTEE  
Minutes of March 28, 1995 Meeting

Present: Edward Morin  
Suzanne Peterson  
Maureen Tobin  
Russell Carrier  
Michael Ahearn  
Michael Bardsley  
Sanford Weil  
Steve Samolewicz

Absent: Pat Shaugnessy

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

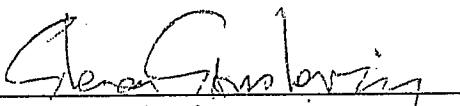
The committee discussed various areas of the charter which appear to warrant further investigation. The areas discussed are as follows:

- Financial officers: possible consolidation into one comptroller position.
- Civil service.
- Terms of city council: should they be staggered?
- Language of the charter: needs revision.
- Home rule adoption.
- Term limits.
- City officers: elected v. appointed.
- Who should preside over city council meetings - mayor or council president.

The committee felt that a newspaper story prior to the May 9, 1995 public hearing would be beneficial to generate interest. Mike Vito to work with Steve Samolewicz on contacting the press.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Submitted by:

  
Steve Samolewicz

5-9-95

City Charter Study Committee  
Public Hearing - Convened 7:00 pm

Committee Members Attending: Suzanne Peluser, Michael Bardsley,  
Sandy Weil, Patte Shaughnessy, Maurice Tobin

Also attending: City Councillors Patrick Goggins & M. Clare Higgins,  
Mayor Mary Ford & Exec. Assistant Michael Vito

The first speaker was Pat Goggins: He would like to see the Committee recommend the question to the mayor. He addressed the age and antiquated structure of the current charter; feels the issue needs some general community awareness; and that we work towards a document tailored to meet our needs. Mr. Goggins also suggests mentioning a hired consultant to the mayor for budgeting consideration. (In 1973 the consultant was paid \$10,000). The areas he thinks need the most attention be paid to streamlining financial offices and procedures, perhaps instituting a "Comptroller" position of some kind. He also mentioned discussing the mayor vs. town manager issue, office terms, and general government set up.

The next speaker was Clare Higgins: She also recommends putting the Charter issue on the ballot, pointing out how difficult the "organizational" chart is - not clear who answers to whom. Ms. Higgins also suggests tightening up duplication in the financial offices, and straightening and modernizing the language.

There being no other speakers wishing to be heard the Committee then began general discussion of the matter. Sandy Weil asked Mr. Goggins' opinion of a Home Rule Charter. Pat feels we should definitely look to a Home Rule Charter. Sandy also pointed to our old language as

a problem. Suzy also indicated that, at the least, the language needs cleaning up to produce a clean document. She also queried whether or not controversial issues should be included. The Committee's consensus on controversial issues was that the actual Charter Commission - if the ballot question passes - have to make that decision.

Pat Higgins addressed the defect of the '73 attempt. He felt the last minute opposition to re-vamping the duties of the City Clerk and the potential of letting city employees run for public office were major points of disagreement to the proposal.

Next the committee discussed who was responsible for gathering signatures. Consensus is that the Study Committee is an advisory group to the mayor and the mayor's office should coordinate it. There was agreement that groups like the League of Women Voters might help.

Manner indicated that the ~~not~~ <sup>use</sup> of a paid consultant might not be necessary. Depending on who the elected commissioners are and their areas of expertise it may be feasible to do it using MMA's services?

The committee voted, upon recommendation by Sandy Weil, seconded by Suzanne Pedersen, to recommend the ballot question to the mayor.

The next meeting was set for May 23, 1995 at 5pm. A key agenda item will be framing our recommendation. Members present will bring some suggested wording to the next meeting.

Adjourned 8:18 pm